

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 06268 01 OF 02 112303Z

61

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAB-01

IO-10 /068 W

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P R 112230Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5422

INFO PANCANAL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PN

SUBJECT: OCTOBER 11: TORRIJOS SPEECH

REF: PANAMA 6113

SUMMARY: OCT. 11 ANNIVERSARY SPEECHES BY HEAD OF GOVERNMENT GEN. OMAR TORRIJOS, AND PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC DEMETRIO LAKAS WERE MODERATE AND SOBER IN TONE. MAJOR POINTS OF THE TORRIJOS ADDRESS INCLUDED: CALL FOR THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE TO UNITE BEHIND GOP AND ITS REVOLUTIONARY EFFORTS, APPEAL FOR PATIENCE AND CALM WITH REGARD TO CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS, RESTATEMENT THAT A SATISFACTORY TREATY IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN A RAPID CONCLUSION OF THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS, AND FINALLY, SIGNAL & WELCOME STATEMENT THAT LABOR GAINS AND CONQUESTS OF CANAL EMPLOYEES WILL BE RESPECTED BY GOP. OCTOBER 11 CELEBRATIONS HAVE BEEN CALM, WITH NO VIOLENCE. TORRIJOS' SPEECH WAS HEARTENING AND EVIDENCE, GOP DESIRE TO CONTINUE NEGOTIATION, AS WELL AS RESPONSIVENESS TO US DOMESTIC NEEDS AND PRESSURES.

1. SPEECHES BY HEAD OF GOVERNMENT, GENERAL OMAR TORRIJOS, AND PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, DEMETRIO LAKAS WERE MODERATE, SOBER
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PAGE 02 PANAMA 06268 01 OF 02 112303Z

REPORTS ON THE STATUS OF PANAMA'S REVOLUTION AND THE PROBLEMS

IT NOW FACES. SPEECHES WERE DELIVERED BEFORE OVERFLOW CROWD AT THE NUEVO GIMNASIO PANAMA, AND FORMALLY INAUGURATED THE REGULAR ANNUAL SESSION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF CORREGIMIENTO REPRESENTATIVES (NACR). (FBIS PANAMA 11858Z OCT 75 HAS TRANSMITTED HIGHLIGHTS OF TORRIJOS' SPEECH, FULL TEXT OF THAT SPEECH AND SPEECHES OF LAKAS, AND ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT DARIO GONZALEZ PITTY WILL BE TRANSMITTED SHORTLY.) WHILE LAKAS DWELT ON THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE PAST SEVEN YEARS, TORRIJOS FOCUSED ON THE REVOLUTIONARY "PROCESS" BASED ON THE ELECTED COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES WHO ARE BRINGING PREVIOUSLY MARGINALIZED CLASSES INTO FULL

PARTICIPATION IN PANAMA'S POLITICAL LIFE. ON ECONOMICS TORRIJOS NOTED THAT PANAMA'S CURRENT DIFFICULTIES WERE SERIOUS, BUT averred THE WORST WERE OVER, AND ADDED THAT PANAMA WAS BEGINNING TO PULL OUT OF ITS ECONOMIC SLUMP. HIGHLIGHTS OF TORRIJOS SPEECH FOLLOW.

2. NATIONAL UNITY. TORRIJOS EMPHASIZED AT SEVERAL POINTS IN HIS ADDRESS THAT NATIONAL UNITY IS INDISPENSABLE IN THE FACE OF THE SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES, BOTH IN ECONOMIC AND FOREIGN POLICY TERMS, THAT PANAMA IS NOW PASSING THROUGH. WITH THE PEOPLE UNITED BEHIND ITS REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT, THESE PROBLEMS WERE NOT INSUPERABLE AND COULD BE DEALT WITH SUCCESSFULLY; WITHOUT THIS REQUISITE UNITY, HE HELD OUT NO HOPE.

3. TREATY NEGOTIATIONS: A. NEED FOR CALM. A CALM AND TRANQUIL ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH THE TREATY NEGOTIATIONS CAN PROGRESS, IN WHICH THE NEGOTIATORS CAN PURSUE THEIR TALKS, IS ESSENTIAL TO THE SUCCESS OF THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS, TORRIJOS DECLARED. WHILE, HE STATED, THE PANAMANIAN NATION IS NEARING THE END OF ITS PATIENCE OVER THE CANAL ISSUE, PANAMANIANS MUST BEAR IN MIND THAT THEIR COUNTRY IS DEALING WITH A GREAT POWER, INDEED WITH A "COLOSSUS"; MOREOVER, A COLOSSUS THAT "SOMETIMES IS RATIONAL, SOMETIMES IRRATIONAL, THAT SOMETIMES THINKS, AND SOMETIMES DOES NOT". PRUDENCE (JUICIO) IS THEREFORE TIMELY AND IMPORTANT. FURTHERMORE, PANAMA IN HER STRUGGLE FOR "LIBERATION" FROM THE "COLONIAL PRESENCE" IS ON VIEW BEFORE A WORLDWIDE AUDIENCE. IT HAS ALREADY MADE GREAT STRIDES IN SECURING SUPPORT AND SOLIDARITY, PARTICULARLY FROM ITS LATIN AMERICAN NEIGHBORS, FOR ITS STRUGGLE. EVEN THE UNITED STATES REALIZES THE WIDE SUPPORT
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PAGE 03 PANAMA 06268 01 OF 02 112303Z

THAT PANAMA ENJOYS.

3. TREATY NEGOTIATIONS: B. SATISFACTORY TREATY MORE IMPORTANT THAN TIMING. ONCE AGAIN TORRIJOS AFFIRMED THAT A TREATY WHICH SATISFIES PANAMA'S JUST "DEMANDS", AND THAT REMOVES THE LAST "TRACES OF COLONIALISM" IS THE NATIONAL OBJECTIVE, AND THAT WHEN SUCH A TREATY IS ACHIEVED IS SECONDARY TO THAT GOAL. TORRIJOS EXCLAIMED THAT HE COULD GET A TREATY LONG BEFORE

NEXT OCT. 11, IN FACT WITHIN A FEW MONTHS, BUT SUCH A TREATY
WOULD BE REJECTED BY THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE. IN A CLEAR REFERENCE
TO THE US ELECTIONS NEXT YEAR, TORRIJOS STATED THAT THE UNITED
STATES IS A NATION CAPABLE OF USING ITS OVERWHELMING POWER TO
ENSURE THAT IT DOES NOT LOSE AN ELECTION.

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 06268 02 OF 02 112318Z

66

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAB-01

IO-10 /068 W

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P R 112230Z OCT 75

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 PANAMA 6268

4. TREATY NEGOTIATIONS: C. BASES AND DURATION. TORRIJOS DECLARED
THAT PANAMA IS NOT NEGOTIATING ON US MILITARY BASES IN THE CANAL
ZONE, RATHER IT IS NEGOTIATING A CALENDAR THROUGH WHICH THOSE
BASES WILL BE DISMANTLED. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE US
MILITARY IN THE CANAL ZONE WAS FORMIDABLE, NOT FICTIONAL, AND
HENCE HAD TO BE CAREFULLY, IF FIRMLY HANDLED. ON DURATION TORRIJOS'
ONLY COMMENT WAS TO REPEAT THAT 100 YEARS OF A "COLONIAL"
PRESENCE WAS ENOUGH, AND SUCH A PRESENCE BEYOND THE CENTURY
WOULD BE INACCEPTABLE.

5. PANAMA CANAL EMPLOYEES. IN SIGNAL POSITION AT HIS SPEECH'S
CLOSING TORRIJOS GAVE ASSURANCE TO CANAL EMPLOYEES. BEGIN QUOTE:
"TO THE U.S. WORKERS WHOSE WORK, TOGETHER WITH THAT OF THE
PANAMANIAN WORKERS, MAKES THE CANAL OPERATION AN EFFICIENT,
CONTINUOUS AND CONSTANT ONE, I WOULD LIKE TO VOICE A CHALLENGE
HERE. FOR THOSE WORKERS WHO WANT THEIR LABOR GAINS TO BE
RESPECTED, GAINS THAT HAVE BEEN OBTAINED THROUGH MANY YEARS

OF STRUGGLE, THE GOVERNMENT AND OUR COUNTRY IS WILLING TO
RESPECT THEM BECAUSE THIS GOVERNMENT IS NOT CHARACTERIZED BY
NEGATING LABOR CONQUESTS OF ANY GROUP OF WORKERS IN THE COUNTRY."
BUT WITH THOSE WORKERS, CONTINUED TORRIJOS, WHO MAINTAIN THAT
A FOREIGN JURISDICTION IS REQUIRED TO CONSERVE THOSE GAINS,
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PAGE 02 PANAMA 06268 02 OF 02 112318Z

PANAMA CANNOT EVEN HOLD A DIALOGUE, AND IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR
THEM TO START TO LEAVE.

6. CELEBRATIONS OF THE OCTOBER 11 HOLIDAY HAVE BEEN QUIET.
EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED NO REPORTS OF ANY VIOLENCE ANYWHERE IN
PANAMA. HAPPILY, FIREWORKS HAVE BEEN SHOT OFF ONLY FOR POPULAR
PLEASURE.

7. COMMENT. TORRIJOS RESISTED ANY TEMPTATION HE MIGHT HAVE HAD TO
DEMAGOGUERY. HE DELIVERED HIS SPEECH IN A SERIOUS AND CALM
MANNER. HE STATED SQUARELY THAT PANAMA CONFRONTS SERIOUS PROBLEMS,
BUT HELD OUT HOPE THAT THEY CAN BE SUCCESSFULLY RESOLVED,
AS LONG AS THE PEOPLE REMAIN UNITED AND CONSCIOUS OF THE MAGNI-
TITUDE OF THEIR NATION'S PROBLEMS. HIS CALL FOR PATIENCE WITH THE
NEGOTIATING PROCESS, AND CALM SO THAT PANAMA'S NEGOTIATORS COULD
DO THEIR JOBS, IS GOOD NEWS FOR NEGOTIATORS ON BOTH SIDES.
HIS EMPHASIS ON A GOOD TREATY-THE TREATY, NOT ANY TREATY,
HE STATED AT ONE POINT-AND REJECTION OF HASTE IN NEGOTIATION
IS VERY HELPFUL FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW. THAT PLUS HIS REFERENCE
TO THE NOVEMBER 1976 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN THE US WAS INTENDED
TO PREPARE PANAMANIANS FOR NEGOTIATIONS EXTENDING THROUGH NEXT
YEAR.

EXTREMELY HEARTENING AND SIGNIFICANT WAS TORRIJOS REFERENCE TO
CANAL EMPLOYEES. IT GAVE CONCRETE EVIDENCE OF HIS WILLINGNESS TO
COOPERATE WITH THE UNITED STATES IN REDUCING TENSION AND ALLAYING
SOME FEARS OF AMERICANS IN THE CANAL ZONE. HIS COMMENTS DREW
SUBSTANTIALLY ON SUGGESTED STATEMENTS PREPARED FOR HIM BY DEPUTY
NEGOTIATOR BELL (SEE REFTEL). TORRIJOS' COMMENTS WILL BE
PUT TO GOOD USE BY THE NEGOTIATORS AND ALSO BY THE EMBASSY'S
LIASON EFFORTS WITH CANAL ZONE GROUPS.
IN SUM, EMBASSY REGARDS TORRIJOS SPEECH AS SENSITIVE BOTH TO
PANAMANIAN DOMESTIC POLITICS AND THOSE OF THE US.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SPEECHES, COMMEMORATIVE CELEBRATIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 OCT 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975PANAMA06268
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750355-0015
From: PANAMA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751059/aaaacawm.tel
Line Count: 213
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 PANAMA 6113
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 SEP 2003 by greeneet>; APPROVED <09 OCT 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: OCTOBER 11: TORRIJOS SPEECH
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PN, (TORRIJOS HERRERA, OMAR), (LAKA, DEMETRIO B)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006